



The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity

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Source: *Representations*, No. 2, (Spring, 1983), pp. 1-25

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928382>

Accessed: 19/05/2008 06:12

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The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity*

IN A THOUGHTFUL discussion of a recent book, a reviewer raised the following objection:

Tracy [D. Tracy, author of *The Analogical Imagination*] may well have to defend himself against theologians who argue that applying the notion of ‘classic’ to persons has only a limited usefulness. Persons are not works of art, not pieces of literature, not paradigmatic actions. . . . By making them into classics, do we not neglect certain aspects of their lives and remove them from history?¹

It might be helpful to begin any paper on the saint as an exemplar in Late Antiquity by explaining in some detail why such an eminently commonsensical remark would have impressed a Late Antique reader—pagan, Jewish or Christian—as the tacit abandonment of the rationale of their whole culture. For the Classics, a literary tradition, existed for the sole purpose of “making [persons] into classics”: exposure to the classics of Greek and Latin literature was intended to produce exemplary beings, their raw humanity molded and filed away by a double discipline, at once ethical and aesthetic.² It was assumed that to be able to put words and thoughts together in an orderly and old-fashioned manner implied that one could also put one’s life together with orderly and old-fashioned decency.³ Books, therefore, were there to produce persons; any other function was considered vaguely ridiculous:

Two things can be acquired from the ancients [wrote Lucian of Samosata, attacking a *parvenu* who had made his money in the book trade]: the ability to speak and act as one ought by emulating the best models and shunning the worst; and when a man clearly fails to benefit from them in one way or the other, what else is he doing but buying haunts for mice and lodgings for worms, and excuses to thrash his servants for negligence?⁴

We find ourselves in a world whose central elites were held together by what Henri-Irenée Marrou has brilliantly characterised as “The Civilization of the *Paideia*.”⁵ The Greco-Roman world, in which the saints later appeared, was a civilization of *paideia* in the same way as our own is a civilization of advanced technology. It invariably tended to opt for the necessary self-delusion that all its major problems could be both articulated and resolved in terms of its one major resource—in this case, by the paradigmatic behavior of elites groomed by *paideia*. Hence a notorious feature of the Roman Empire, which has long puzzled and frequently

irritates modern scholars. Not only does the day-to-day running of this great legal and administrative institution tend to crumble, on close inspection, into a congeries of “interpersonal acts”⁶; legal and institutional structures tend to be deliberately excluded from contemporary analysis and from most contemporary expectations of change and decision-making.⁷ It was widely agreed that any problem that was going to get solved had first to be reduced to a clear-cut issue of deportment, that could be viewed in relation to a constellation of vivid human exemplars preserved in the classics: for only then could the impressive resources of the civilization of *paideia* be brought to bear with hope of success. No one would expect a new emperor to draft a new constitution, hardly, even, to institute a new “policy.”⁸ but what upper-class contemporaries could hope and articulate volubly, was that he would *be* a new Augustus, *be* a new Trajan.⁹

Before we dismiss the ancient Romans as hopelessly encapsulated from reality by their backward-looking literary culture,¹⁰ we should remember that any complex and self-confident society can only articulate and mobilize a very small sliver of the intractable reality in which it finds itself caught. By and large, it will tend to diagnose its own ills in terms of what it feels it has to hand as means with which to offer a cure. To do otherwise would be to face despair.

What is more truly peculiar about the late classical world is the overwhelming tendency to find what is exemplary in persons rather than in more general entities. Despite a past littered with magnificent political experiments, a *state of affairs* never wielded the same exemplary power as did individual heroes and heroines. Political caution in an Imperial post-democratic age should not be ruled out.¹¹ Yet I would suggest that the balance towards seeing persons as classics had already been tipped by the intensely personal manner in which the culture of *paideia* was passed on from generation to generation. Intensive male bonding between the generations lay at the heart of the “Civilization of *Paideia*.” No student ever went, as we do, to a university conceived of as an impersonal institution of learning—to “Cal,” to “the G.T.U.” (How much these abbreviations speak of our desire to treat learning as a studiously impersonal process!) He would always have gone to a person—to Libanius, to Origen, to Proclus. The most poignantly expressed relation in the ancient and medieval worlds was that between teacher and pupil. From the farewell poem of Paulinus to Ausonius, his old master

Thee shall I behold, in every fibre woven.
Shall I behold thee, in my mind embrace thee,
Instant and present, there, in every place.¹²

to Dante’s encounter with Bruno Latini in the *Inferno*, we are never very far from

la cara e buona imagine paterna
di voi, quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora
m’insegnavate come l’uom s’eterna.¹³

Thus, while we, as students, are encouraged to shake off the shabby particularisms of the all too-personal present, in order to look forward to a magnificently universal and impersonal “Shape of Things to Come,” ancient men did the exact opposite: seeing in the present a universal insouciance and mediocrity, they turned from this general state of affairs to find, among the ancients, vivid persons as objects of a personal loyalty and imitation.

Rather than be surprised by such a reflex, we should remember how long it survived without serious challenge. Exemplars, if carefully sought out, studied and remembered at appropriate moments, were still thought to add a strand of steel to the frail fiber of eighteenth century gentlemen: “Fancied myself Burke,” wrote Boswell—admittedly one of the frailest—“and drank moderately.”¹⁴

What is more surprising is the manner in which a remote past was held to be immediately available to late classical men. We are in a world that has not yet been “condemned to history” by Hegel. Historical change was palpable to ancient men; the causes of some major changes had been intently studied by Greeks; yet the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century idea of a past rendered inevitably, irrevocably irrelevant by unidirectional motion in all ages was totally alien to ancient men. The vast sadness of time concentrated on the more concrete and immediate injuries inflicted by the devouring power of death and on the perennial ingratitude of negligence and loss of memory. It is the sadness of a child in the house of dead grandparents: the family furniture is still all there; but nobody now keeps it as tidy as had granny.

The analogy of change that sprang most readily to mind to men of *paideia* was intimately linked to the system of education that all had received. Men whose ideal was the ability to recall large chunks of precise and exquisitely shaped material, internalized by memory at an early age, knew only too well what it was like to rummage in a silt of memories for the perfect citation, for the correct word, for the telling rhetorical structure.¹⁵ Historical change was like that: a process of neglect that made it ever more difficult, but never impossible, to whistle again a bar of a favorite aria of Mozart, to recite the opening lines of a speech from Shakespeare. Contemporaries felt that they had to overcome the abusive force of time, by finding out and clearing away the “droppings of this age”¹⁶ as these had piled like light guano over the *vestigia*, the footprints left by the majestic figures of the past.¹⁷ Far from encouraging a helpless nostalgia for a lost past, this was a basically comforting and optimistic doctrine. For if the *exempla* of the past were merely overlaid by the passing of time, and not rendered irreversibly obsolescent, they were available to the present and the future. Hence the enormous faith evinced by the last Romans of the Western Empire in the imminent *renovatio* of their floundering society: like the Balinese of the nineteenth century, they tended to agree that “the decline was the way history had happened to happen, not the way it had had to happen.”¹⁸ If they wished to articulate a more modern awareness of decline as an irreversible, and

above all, as a communal, historical process, they had to turn to the shabby penumbra of their culture: it is only among astrologers that we can find both a language of irreversible determinism, and, at the same time, a language that was able to embrace topics as unwieldy as the fate and motion of large masses of men, such as an empire.¹⁹ By and large, their attitude was like that of Mark Twain when faced with the inconstancy of Boston weather: “if you do not like it, wait a minute.”

This is the reaction of a human community unlike our own, in that, for all its political and military upheavals, no major ecological or technological development had intervened for a millennium, to create totally new conditions, and so totally new codes of living. The Late Antique confidence in the continued relevance in the fourth century A.D. of moral paradigms first enunciated in the sixth century B.C. is simply a part of history *à longue durée* in the Mediterranean. Reading the inscription of a gentleman-farmer of the second century A.D. in Asia Minor, praising him as a “man worthy of Hesiod,” we have little reason to think that, given the minimal changes in agrarian technology and the glacial tenacity of local customary law, he experienced so much as a flicker of “cognitive dissonance” in investing his interpersonal relations with an old-time dignity. Seen in terms of the compact essence of the life of a man of *paideia*—which was how he related to and spoke with others both in face-to-face situations and in his correspondence and literary production—the moral landscape of such a man had eroded as little as had the densely settled, pre-nomadic landscape of his province.²⁰

It is perhaps the final assumption of the “civilization of *Paideia*” that is the most alien to us, and that awakens in us serious resistance. It was surprising enough to believe that so compact a code of style and deportment could possibly permeate a highly complex society, which had to face its fair share of perilous novelties. It is strange to believe that a vertiginously distant past can saturate the present in its moral paradigms. But we positively rebel against the idea that the raw stuff of human individuality can be thought to be capable of giving way entirely, so that the human person not only draws encouragement and validation from the moral exemplars of the past, but is actually able to make himself transparent to the values summed up in these exemplars: this is a “person made into a classic” with a vengeance! It is easier to dismiss the “Civilization of *Paideia*” as *précieux*, as backward-looking, as perpetually—maybe pointedly—irrelevant to any age in which it was held up for esteem: it is far harder to take it for what it claimed to be—an instrument for producing persons totally formed to its norms, a pressure-machine designed to turn out the human equivalent of industrial diamonds.

A late classical man would have seen the matter from a significantly different angle. We tend to imagine the “Civilization of *Paideia*” as a system of discipline working relentlessly from the outside in. Our post-Augustinian sensitivity to the *abyssus conscientiae*, the unplumbed depths of the inner world, leaves us highly sceptical that a discipline of such apparently superficial content, so literary in its

content and so aesthetic in its aims, could possibly have reached as deep as it claimed to do; and, in any case, we would be appalled if it had succeeded. What concerned classical men was the capacity of the inner to permeate the outer. They expected their soul to display its quality in their body, and, along with the body, in those concrete and visible particulars of poise and lifestyle that counted so much for them. While it was obvious to them that the soul was *private*, in the sense that it was patently shielded by the body from the view of outsiders, it by no means followed from this that the body was private from the soul. They believed without question that moral paradigms that had bitten to any depth in the soul would and should show themselves by reassuringly consistent body-signals—by poise, by tone of voice, even by the control of breathing, and certainly of laughter, which the grave tended to avoid as carefully and as successfully as farting (to which it was closely related in ancient respiratory theory).²¹ They wanted the bewitching serenity that was the mark of a man *aus einem Guss*: “The attire of a man and the gait of his feet, and the laughter of his teeth show him for what he is.”²² The process by which the body and the care of the body (its hair and its costume) came to be thought of as so private from the soul, a vehicle of such reduced conductivity between the self and others that all styles of particular deportment could be dismissed as in some way forms of evasive or protective maneuvering, involves shifts in psychology, in social relations, and even, perhaps, in costume: for up to around A.D. 300, we are still in a world used to nudity, and to a cut of clothes that thought little of it.²³ Such shifts had only begun to happen in Late Antiquity: as John Chrysostom said, the believer “should be discernible, by everything, by his gait, by his look, by his garb, by his voice. And this, as I have said, not that display, but that the profit of the beholders may be the rule by which we form ourselves.”²⁴

The deeper problem, of course, is that body and soul were subjected to what would strike a modern man as too narrow and too unbending a set of paradigms. Here modern man and late classical products of *paideia* would part company as totally as modern Europeans must part company from traditional Javanese.²⁵ The imagery of formation itself is not altogether reassuring: the sculptor of the soul does not, like Michelangelo, bring out the surprising essence of the block; rather, he chisels and files and polishes away the unnecessary lumps of stone that stand in the way of a perfect shape.²⁶ Once again, it is only to the astrologers, who treated their clients as a cat’s cradle of conflicting planetary influences, that one can turn to get some sense of the knots and twisted grain of the individuality of ancient men.²⁷ An overpowering sense of the normative and a consequent lack of sensitivity to the particulars of the individual psyche has been noticed by the best studies of the classical care of souls.²⁸ The result can be a certain sameness. Tolstoy’s opening remarks in *Anna Karenina*—“All happy families are alike, but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion”²⁹—strikes us as somewhat chilling; our Late Classical reader would have found it a statement of the obvious. Continuity through replication was

what the “Civilization of *Paideia*” could achieve: individuality could be left to the only too predictable ravages of time and eccentricity, without being raised to a value in its own right.

In Late Antique hagiography, we can follow this old-fashioned faith in the capacity of a culture to “make persons into classics” facing ideological and sociological pressures such as the “Civilization of *Paideia*” had never faced. Let us look at what is new in the role of the Christian saint as exemplar.

First, and most obvious: the world of *paideia*, without being in any manner irreligious, had been a largely closed system, devoted to the maximization by well-tried, purely human methods (ranging from teaching to the pressures of family and peer group), those human potentialities that were long known to be necessary for human interaction in well-defined and exclusively human situations. Judaism, and later Christianity, brought to this Mediterranean-wide system of discipline the unprecedented weight of a providential monotheism, which, in both cases, placed an exceptional weight on the joining points between God and men, and which, in the case of Christianity, proposed as its central figure, the Exemplar of all exemplars, a being, Christ, in Whom human and divine had come to be joined.

The old constellations of exemplars could never look the same. But we must be careful as to why this should be so: it was not that such exemplars were pagan, still less that the moral paradigms of the ancients were deemed irrelevant to believers in the new faith. The opposite was the case: classical literature was ransacked with, if anything, greater attention than ever before, in order to steel the uncertain moral fiber of the average Christian.³⁰ Rather, God, and no purely human system of transmission, was now held to play the decisive role in bringing the exemplars of the past alive from age to age. The idea of a community of the righteous, linking Israel to its forebears and through those to God, has been rightly described as “a singular feature in religious history.”³¹ With this belief, the exemplar ceases to be merely a past human paradigm reactivated, by human means, in the present: the “man of God,” the “righteous man,” has a revelatory quality about him. The known presence of righteous men in Israel had the effect of bringing God Himself back from exile in the hearts of those who doubted His abiding presence in a darkening world.³² No longer thought of as guiding stars, set in a flat and distant sky, the saints of Israel and the Early Church are a Milky Way thrown down from Heaven to earth,³³ by a God Who “wishes all men to be saved.”³⁴ The saint is a gift of God to his or her age and region.

Furthermore, in Christian thought, God Himself was proposed to man as the Exemplar behind all exemplars:

For the first making of man was according to the imitation of God’s likeness—wrote Gregory of Nyssa—, and the promise of Christianity is that man will be brought back to the original happiness. If, then, original man be God’s likeness, our definition will probably not miss the mark if we declare that Christianity is an imitation of the divine nature.³⁵

The result of this view was to present human history as containing a sequence of exemplars, each of which made real, at varying times and in varying degrees, the awesome potentiality of the first model of humanity—Adam, human nature created “in the image of God,” before the Fall. For

in Moses and men like him the form of that image was kept pure. Now when the beauty of the form has not been obscured, then is made plain the faithfulness of the saying that man is an image of God.³⁶

In Christ, the original beauty of Adam had blazed forth; and it is for that reason that the life of the Christian holy man could be treated as a prolonged and deeply circumstantial “imitation of Christ.”

We should begin, however, by making a careful (though inevitably somewhat schematic) distinction between this, the Late Antique form of the Imitation of Christ, and that disciplining of the religious sensibility associated with later Christocentric devotion in the late Middle Ages and Reformation. This latter strand of the Western religious sentiment is so far better known, it still runs so imperceptibly in the blood of modern Christians, that the Late Antique ideal of the “Christ-carrying man” is frequently not even recognised as such. Somehow the well-known face of our suffering Savior seems refracted, in the Early Christian and Byzantine tradition, into too bewildering a scatter of images, some too grandiose, others too inconsequential, and some, even downright inappropriate to modern Western eyes.³⁷

At the risk of an oversimplification, by which I do not in any way intend to diminish the richness of the more recent Western concept, the Late Antique Imitation of Christ, though it did include a powerful affective aspect, which frequently took visual form,³⁸ did not take as its starting point the projection of the imagination and the sensibility of the believer on to a relatively fixed and delimited image of the historical Jesus and the circumstances of His life and Passion. That passing of the mind to a precise image “out there,” such as would cause Margery Kemp to fall to “great boisterous weeping” at the sight of a *pietà* on the altar of a side-chapel, or the sight of a man carrying a plank across his back, was notably less prominent in Early Christian disciplines of meditation. Late Antique men did not tend to kneel, as do the donors on Flemish Primitive paintings, gazing with sad eyes at a hill of Golgotha fixed forever with a merciless exactitude. A leap of the imagination across time seen as a thrilling but real chasm, demanding to be crossed by the Christian heart, lies at the back of late medieval and modern devotion:

There is a green hill far away,
Outside a city wall . . .

The late classical sense that the present still lay wide open to permeation by a past conceived of as distant from it merely through the accident of time led Early Christians to look in a different direction in order to imitate Christ. Gregory of Nyssa—and many Christians less profound and idiosyncratic than himself—scanned the

human race as a whole, finding in the righteous of all ages that shimmer of the original and future majesty of man. Adam had borne it and Christ had brought it back, evanescent, elusive but reassuringly the same, like the fleeting expression of a face cunningly carved (here Gregory was thinking of the ancient equivalents of those little anamorphic pictures—now available in plastic—which show different scenes when viewed from different angles) so that from one side the divine quality of man might appear, a sweet light smile playing across the whole face, while from the other all that could be seen was the hard frown of fallen man.³⁹ The imitation of Christ, therefore, strove to bring the elusive touch of the majesty of Adam into the present age. Though the phrase does not, to my knowledge, occur among Late Antique Christian writers in this context, *repraesentatio Christi*, making Christ present by one's own life in one's own age and region, appears to be the aim and effect of the Early Christian *Imitatio Christi*.

Indeed, the Christ-bearing man, having become forebearing, shines down on all men like the sun, showing to all the life of Heaven.⁴⁰

The idea had a long past in the pagan philosophical tradition: in his *Life of Pythagoras*, Jamblichus spoke of the wise man reflecting God in his life, as the blazing disc of the sun is caught in the water at the bottom of a still well.⁴¹ The theological background and the implications of the idea have been studied with renewed sympathy and justifiable enthusiasm.⁴² It might be worth our while, therefore, to step aside for a moment, from theology, to consider some of the concrete circumstances that rendered such a belief, in its various forms, eminently adapted to the rise of Christianity in the Late Antique world.

I would like to begin by acknowledging a debt to the recent work of Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz, on the nature of charisma itself, and on the subtle manner in which charisma can be seen to be distributed and “reactivated” in complex societies. I do not think that to apply their methods does violence to the nature of our period. Rather, like a traveller returned home after a spell of residence abroad, I have found that their work has helped me to see, with the clarity that can come from an instant of unfamiliarity, some of the central problems of a very familiar topic—the Christianization of the Mediterranean world.

For Shils, the main concern is how the “central value system,” that is, “the values which are pursued and affirmed by the elites of the constituent sub-systems” of a society,⁴³ comes to penetrate the cluttered “periphery” of more sensible, immediate loyalties and preoccupations, that make up the day to day life of a large society. For only when this “central value system” permeates parts, at least, of its periphery, if at very different levels of intensity, can a society maintain the minimum sense of common purpose and continuity. For

what sociologists and social anthropologists call the central values or belief system of a society can be lived up to only partially, fragmentarily, intermittently and only in an approximate

way. . . . For the rest of the time, the ultimate values of the society, what is sacred to its members, are suspended amidst the distractions of concrete tasks.⁴⁴

Given this view of the largely half-perceived penetration of the larger society by its “central value system,” it is possible to view charisma not so much as an eruption, as the *Aussertächlich* breaking through the routine structures of institutional life; but, rather, charisma can be seen as something less dramatic and less highly “personalised.” It is more like a water table: the pure water of “central concerns” slowly continues to seep beneath the gravel of daily life. A significant event, and not necessarily only a significant person, can bring this seepage together into a momentary reservoir of serious concern. Charisma, therefore, is seen less in terms of the extraordinary, set aside from society, so much as the convincing concentration in an event, in an institution, in a discipline or in a person of lingering senses of order and higher purpose. Rather than inevitably marking a moment of breakdown and of new departure, “Concentrated and intense charismatic authority transfigures the half life into incandescence.”⁴⁵

Now if there was ever a society which suffered from a permanent ache of “center” and “periphery,” it was the Roman Empire. If ever there was a body committed by its ideology to ensure that a periphery wrapped, in the words of the *Cherubic Hymn* of the orthodox Eucharistic Liturgy, “in the cares of this life,” should be touched with the dread of the “coming presence of the King of Kings,” it was the Christian Church that had developed in the Roman Empire. Furthermore, the culture and concrete institutions of the Church had tended to coagulate in the same locations where the “central value system” of the Empire had already existed at its greatest intensity. Before the conversion of Constantine and for centuries after, the Church should never be seen (as it is so often presented in maps) as a single wash of color spreading evenly and inexorably across the *orbis terrarum*: it was an archipelago of little islands of “centrality” scattered across an “unsown sea” of almost total indifference.

Hence the crucial importance of the holy man as “Christ-carrying” exemplar. In almost all regions of the Mediterranean, from the third century onwards, he was far more than an exemplar of a previously well-organised and culturally coherent Christianity: very often, he quite simply *was* Christianity. Looking at Pachomius reading the Gospels in the little, newly-founded church in the deserted village of Tabennisi, noting that he “controlled his eyes as he ought and that his mouth matched his mind,” men of the world, seeing the man of God in their midst, had even greater desire to become Christians and believers.⁴⁶ What all of them may not have known (though some monks learned of the fact with thrilled delight)⁴⁷ was that their exemplar as a Christian had come, only recently, from a totally pagan village. Pachomius and many of his monks had to learn their Christianity, as it were, “on the job,” while acting as exemplars to a body of laymen even less Christianized than themselves. We must look out from the neat pages of standard histories of the church

in order to catch both the exciting prospects and flexibilities, but also the deep lack of cultural and religious resources—amounting to a real impoverishment—that characterized life the Great Frontier of new Christian communities in Late Antiquity. A holy man, or the legend and shrine later connected with a holy person, could stand for a little drop of the “central value system” of Christianity oozing tremulously to the surface. At the shrine, the angel that had “stretched forth his hand and stroked his [the martyr’s] whole body; and straightway he was healed as if he had never been tortured at all,”⁴⁸ might now stand at its unpretentious altar, to touch the agonized ill.⁴⁹ The well-to-do would be encouraged, on the day of the saint, to give alms to the poor, “or produce a book for the house of God in his name or buy a Gospel and place it in the martyr’s shrine.”⁵⁰ A small, shabby gesture: but without it, would Saint Anthony ever have heard the words of the Gospel “*If thou wouldst be perfect. . .*” read out from his village church? A fresco, later, perhaps, a little encaustic icon, might remind the passer-by of a touch of beauty and unbroken harmony in a dirty and preoccupied world:

And this boy Shenoufe was a fair person, more than them all; he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and hair entwined like clusters of henna blossom.⁵¹

Only we, who can hide behind books and machines for the propagation of the Gospel, can afford to underestimate the crucial importance, in the frontier-life of the Early Church, of the human exemplar:

I am convinced that God added to the length of their days [wrote the cultivated Constantinopolitan lawyer Sozomen of the holy men of Syria] for the express purpose of furthering the interests of religion.⁵²

The idea of the holy man as Christ made accessible adds a rather different shade of color than I had first thought possible, to the picture of the holy man, whose “Rise and Function” I had sketched out a decade ago, in more *grisaille* tones. In that study, the holy man was presented as “rural patron” and as a “charismatic Ombudsman” in the villages of the eastern Mediterranean.⁵³

At the risk of appearing unduly autobiographical, it might be helpful if I were to make plain some of the intellectual circumstances under which I came to this view, and the further considerations that would lead me, at this moment, to modify it. If there is any virtue in such a personal approach, it is to add a sense of the slowness of flesh and blood to changes of perspective that can so easily be portrayed, in modern academic circumstances, as deceptively effortless, as dispassionate “switches” from one current methodology to another. I can only say that I have never found the matter so simple.

I would not have written that article in the way in which I did without the decisive impetus of a specific tradition of anthropological work available to me at that time. To be candid, this tradition amounted to the literature and the seminal ideas to which I had access by the only means proper to a scholar: that is, not by the dutiful scanning of bibliographies; but through firm and nurturing ties of friendship,

of admiration and respect for individual practitioners of these disciplines. In this respect, I mention with particular indebtedness Mary Douglas and Sally Humphreys, the last both a historian and a teacher of anthropology: they were later joined by two Islamicists, Ernest Gellner and Michael Gilsenan. Equally important were those who already showed that what the anthropologists had preached could be practised in our own discipline, the scholar of ancient history, Keith Hopkins, and the medieval legal historian, Paul Hyams, who first lent me his copy of Douglas's seminal *Purity and Danger*. Much of this interchange had been made possible by a "micro-climate" in historical studies maintained and exemplified more than in any other man, by Arnaldo Momigliano, at University College, London. Last, but not least, there was the heavy buzzing of bees in the back of my own bonnet.

Looking back at what I would now have to abandon and modify in my previous picture of the holy man, I think that the greatest single feature of my portrayal of the holy man in need of revision would be his "splendid isolation." In presenting him in this way, I had been influenced by three roughly convergent concerns.

The first of these was historical. The work of Norman Baynes had led me to view as central to the quality of Byzantine civilization, the emergence of what he aptly characterised as

the double ethic which is of primary significance in East Roman life—two standards: one for the ordinary Christian living his life in the work-a-day world, and the other the standard for those who were haunted by the words of Christ, "If thou wouldst be perfect. . . ."⁵⁴

It still strikes me that "A society that wanted nothing less than saints seems to have paid insufficient attention to the gradual improvement of sinners."⁵⁵ If a modern version of Lecky's disdainful *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* is to be written, this would be a central theme. The appearance in 1964 of A. H. M. Jones's magnificently sane *Later Roman Empire* reinforced this impression.⁵⁶ But this reading of Baynes did not prepare me as well, as a historian, to deal with figures in Late Antiquity who were thought of as less dramatically removed from the average ethical life of their fellows, as were the heroes of the Christian ascetic movement: thus it took me a long time to begin to understand the pagan *theios anēr*, the rabbi, even the saintly bishop; and the later role of the Muslim holy man was, at that time, unknown to me.⁵⁷

The second concern was psychoanalytic: This was a time when historians with Freudian interests, such as E. R. Dodds, had been concerned to apply psychoanalytic insights to the emotions and behavior of the holy men themselves.⁵⁸ By contrast, I was more implicated in and deeply indebted to the later insights of Melanie Klein, of which I had direct experience through psychoanalysis throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, I tended to look, rather, at the psychological dynamics of groups, especially of small groups. It was the tendency of such groups to invest persons or things with heightened qualities of good or evil that struck me. The mechanisms of "cathecting" with good feelings, of the "projection" of bad feelings

onto others, and, above all, the brittle and intense psychic defences of “idealization,” seemed to me to give a clue to understanding why Late Antique men charged certain persons and objects with such vivid and positive qualities. For, as I passed these in review in the course of the early 1970s, each struck me in its own way, as being opaque and faceless as a Rohrschach test—a stranger on the edge of a village, a little square of painted wood, the confused and bloody outcome of an ordeal, the chill anonymity of human remains.⁵⁹ Could there be a psychoanalytic answer, couched in terms of “projection” and “idealization,” to the remark of Durkheim that I once copied, with satisfaction, into the flyleaf of a book?

Since neither man nor nature have of themselves a sacred character, they must get it from another source.⁶⁰

These two concerns led naturally to the last: A strand of post-Durkheimian and of British functionalist anthropology impressed me, above all, by its deep sanity and tolerance for the strangeness of others. For a historian, reared in a tradition of religious history that showed a scarcely veiled intellectualist contempt for the long, fumbling cunning of unlettered men, it still seems to me that this tradition of social anthropology was the only entrance through which it was possible, at that time, to pass into aspects of Late Antiquity that were frequently far better documented and more capable (once judged worthy of study) of yielding original results for the history of the Early Church, than were the more elevated highroads of *Dogmen*—and *Kirchengeschichte*.⁶¹ To stoop beneath that low and very concrete lintel is not, in my opinion, to “go in search of trendy non-religious explanations of the social needs that created” the reputation of the saints in Late Antiquity:⁶² it is a sign of respect for the alien in our own past.

But if that tradition did have a limitation, to which I succumbed wholeheartedly and, like any outsider to a foreign discipline, almost certainly caricatured, it was the tendency to isolate the holy man yet further from the world of shared values in which he operated as an exemplar. I found, largely in anthropological studies of spirit-possession and divination, a coherent method with which to understand the social strategies and the social rituals by which “holy” persons and objects could be vested with “objectified” characteristics, through being segregated in various ways from the common networks of society.⁶³ This emphasis on the “separation of the sacred”⁶⁴ largely confirmed both Norman Baynes’s perception of the “double ethic” in Late Roman life and my own, psychoanalytic concern with, and personal experience of, the urgent, poignant need of men and women to “idealise,” to “cathect” some area of life with unalloyed goodness and trenchant certainty. At that time, I suppose, I believed that, even if Voltaire had been wrong to say that Religion happened when the first knave met the first fool, the Christianity associated with the holy man usually seemed to me to have happened when the first psychologically sensitive doctor met the first anxious patient, and the first confused client met the first good counsellor. Lest a modern reader think this too cold and clinical an image,

I would remind him or her that we are speaking of the Britain of the late 1960s, a society that had every reason to be proud of a medical welfare system, whose psychiatric and counselling services had shown that it was still possible, in a complex modern society, to “stretch out a helping hand to those in distress.”⁶⁵

What tended to be pushed to one side in such a basically clinical image of the activity of the holy man were those unspoken bonds of admiration and love that might, for all I knew, have bound the saints to their local clients—precisely as accessible exemplars, and not exclusively as sociologically and clinically “removed” decision-makers. Certain considerations began to make me think that I had to change my mind. In a personal letter, Professor Averil Cameron pointed out the lack, in my account, of the East Roman sense of the holy man as the average Christian writ large: a bridge of shared values, if often as frail as the path of the moon across the sea, linked the man of the world to his exemplar. A student pointed out to me that some of the miracles performed by the Syrian holy men happened at the request of families who could not possibly have known their budding saints in a public role, as patron, arbitrator and counsellor: some more intimate, perhaps more intrinsic, essence of sanctity led them to the still-secluded hermit.⁶⁶ William Christian’s *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* showed me that dead saints were something more than neutral objects that could “take an even heavier charge of urgency and idealisation without answering back,” and so “could be saturated with the values projected on to them by the group.”⁶⁷ They seemed to have maintained a firm profile of beloved and admired persons; and this profile was not the result of a momentary decision or reflex to “invest” them with sanctity: it had been both constructed and maintained by a long process of sensitization to distinctive, exemplary traits “learned in early childhood and carried through to the grave.”⁶⁸

But in order to make sense of all this, I had to bend my mind to a task for which I was largely unprepared. Social historians of the Later Roman Empire, to which serious profession I trust that I still belong, can pluck down with both hands the miraculously abundant crop of anecdotal material contained in the *Lives of the Saints*. Its very particularity, and its strict delimitation to precise times and places, made it inevitable that such material should first be used, to seize, whenever possible, the particular and the momentary and especially by someone like myself, who had learned that it was possible, through anthropological studies, to look with fresh eyes at the small communities that formed the basis of all Late Antique religious history. Furthermore, it was absolutely essential to pit a new-won sense of and respect for precise social needs and precise social circumstances against the dreary and self-confident uniformity of pronouncements of all but a very few scholars of Late Antique “popular religion,” caught, as these respected gentlemen seemed to me to be, in the *mentalité sauvage* of an amalgam of Humeian pragmatism rendered “scientific” by a “cultural Darwinism.” In the early 1970s this amalgam still passed, among historians of the ancient world and of hagiography, as the latest and most up-to-date ancillary tool for the student.⁶⁹

Now a historian hot on the track of such material, culled by such methods, has virtually to perform a backward somersault to change course in the direction hinted at in the criticisms of others, in William Christian's book and in the approach that has surfaced in the work of Shils and Geertz. What I had now to study were the abiding mental structures of the Mediterranean villagers, having been content, previously, to say that such men were not blind primitives, but canny farmers coping as best they could with "life's great casuistry." I now had to ask myself what abiding "Identikit" of religious expectations led our villagers to recognize in a holy man, however spasmodically, imperfectly, and in however self-interested a manner, a figure who distilled in concrete and accessible form values and expectations that had a lifetime, a viscosity and a resilience that outlived the day-to-day strategies of patronage, "objectification" and arbitration, whose spoor I had learned to trace, in the sources, with such relish, in individual incidents in the lives of individual holy men. How, again, did the biographers and disciples of these men think that they were contributing to and drawing from that heavy atmosphere of "central values," when they wrote these *Lives*? Such questions enabled me to move just a little further than I thought I could at the time, towards answering a question posed to my work in the admirable recent article of Han Drijvers, in the Birmingham Symposium on *The Byzantine Saint*:

What is the influence of a written and preached tradition on human behaviour in a given historical and social situation? In other words, what is the interrelation between sociological and ideological elements in society?⁷⁰

To move from a largely British tradition of social anthropology to a largely American tradition of cultural anthropology is an eminently respectable move, and can bring with it a considerable widening of one's cultural horizon. Yet it is a feather-light task compared with learning how to lean one's weight against the solid boulders of Christian belief systems. It involved recapturing the enduring images of order, of beauty, of respite that the 'Christ-carrying man,' or his shrine, brought with him into the village. To do this was to study topics that I had never studied before; and that I am not confident that I will ever be able to handle with the same delighted certainty as when, as a social historian, I turned over and over solid gold nuggets of "Mediterranean peasant life," panned from the *Lives of the Saints*. For I have had to attempt to seize a *longue durée* of Jewish and Christian imaginative structures in the Near East, passing from the Old Testament, through late Jewish and Christian Apocrypha, through the Gospels, and coming to rest, in the daily life of the Church in the villages, in a tantalising humus of Early Christian liturgy, ritual and prophylaxis. Reading Late Roman inscriptions, I found, to my surprise, that my eye now lighted on different lines of the text. I no longer noted only the enterprise of rural deans, the jubilation of deserters who had made it to the monastery, the dubious evidences of good-neighborliness revealed in invocations against the evil eye carved on the lintels of farmhouses in villages that flanked the column of

Saint Symeon on Telnesin. Instead, a fragment of the Psalms would strike me by its sheer repetitiveness, like the solemn, customary greetings of a Near Eastern country, “gently whispered salaams” come to rest on the stone. The life of the local holy man was thought to be resonant with such sweet noises.

Travelling in the Islamic Mid-East, I was deeply affected by a still half-comprehended series of contacts with a healing shrine. As far as I could judge, in the inner chambers of this shrine, the atmosphere was so electric, not with what a Western traveller might dismiss, or the cautious might avoid, as “fanaticism,” but with an imminent possibility of release, carefully maintained by traditional forms of acclamatory prayer (distant Muslim cousins of the invocations on the Syrian inscriptions that I had read in the Bodleian Library). It was as if these acclamations merely waited for the person or the family with sufficient resolution and sufficient good conscience in the face of the obvious, to reach out and to pluck a condensed essence of healing and mercy out of the all-embracing hubub. Prolonged habitual exposure to a traditional liturgy (that of the Orthodox Church) further persuaded me of one thing: that the heavy silt of Biblical citations, the stale, interchangeable *topoi* and conventional pieties, that I had learned even from the Bollandist editors of the *Lives of the Saints* to avoid if I were ever to seize the “real” historical content of such texts, were of as high a carat content as were the solid nuggets that I had loved to pan from Byzantine hagiography.

The remainder of this paper, therefore, aims to explore a few of the methodological consequences of a thoroughly unsystematic evolution. How, in practice, did the Late Antique saint both fulfill in the eyes of others, and internalise in himself, the double role of “Christ carrier” and representative of the “central value system?”

Let us begin with the holy man at his most particular, as the particular disciple of a particular master. Let us take as our starting point a marble plaque discovered in the ruins of a little church in central Anatolia. It is an inscription set up by a certain Lucianus, the disciple of none other than the great martyr, Saint Lucian of Antioch.⁷¹

Having lived without conceit,
Having honoured as is due,
Lucian the martyr,
He who nurtured you.
With him Christ made you
A follower of Himself,
A carrier of His Cross:
A Cross dwelt on divinely in the mind,
And touched by you [the martyr Lucian]
In concrete pains [of death].

Such language enables us to sense something of the vigour of the early phases of the ascetic movement of the fourth century. In this movement, the intensity of the master-pupil relationship, that had ensured the continuity and the characteristics of the “Civilization of *Paideia*,” had been heightened to such an extent that literacy itself, both the medium and the *raison d’être* of traditional *paideia*, was vaporized in the intensity of face to face loyalty. Direct force of example was what mattered most; and the “Imitation of Christ,” not mediated by any text or visual aid, was the logical extension to the divine Master of the tangible, almost pre-verbal adherence of the human pupil to his human model. A little later, the Pachomian monasteries had grouped large bodies of men through the same hope of direct contact with a master: “knowing that, in listening to him, we make ourselves servants of Jesus.”⁷² The early monks looked up, through chains of revered teachers and ecclesiastical leaders, to see, in these, the figure of their Lord. “Indeed,” said the monks to the Patriarch of Alexandria, “when we look at you, it is as if we look upon Christ.”⁷³

Behind this sudden faith in the possibility in their own times, and in widely separate areas, of the Imitation of Christ, there lies the experience of the Great Persecution. Desultory though these persecutions might appear to a modern historian, what brutalities and death did occur in the years between 303 and 320 fitted with perfect precision into the expectations of a pre-existing mentality of the *repraesentatio Christi*, as this had grown in resonance and circumstantiality in the course of the third century:⁷⁴ the passing incidents of martyrdom and prison were amplified in such a way as permanently to affect (and possibly to distort) the awareness of the ascetic movement of its own origins and *raison d’être*. Seen in retrospect, the Era of the Martyrs (as it came to be called in Egypt) was a moment of heightened acceleration in the passing on of the “presence of Christ” in the world. The martyrs brought Christ into the present not only by their endurance of physical pain and humiliation. For a Late Antique martyrdom was more than a re-enactment of the pains of the Passion: in it, God’s mighty hand reached down into the present, with magnificent declaratory effect, to grant, yet again, stunning victory over pain and the devil.⁷⁵ Others could embark on less drastic privations, driven less by the need to identify themselves passively with such pain, as nerved by the same hope of victory:

And I, Julius, by reason of the pains which I saw the saints suffering, will never again drink wine or anoint my body with oil, till the day of my death.⁷⁶

The opening chapters of the first Greek *Life of Pachomius* echoed the same belief: the *repraesentatio Christi*, first particularized by the martyrs, was particularized yet again by the monks.⁷⁷ Seen in this perspective, asceticism was not a consolation for the absence of opportunities for the martyr’s experience of pain, an experience amply recreated by ingenious forms of self-torture (in which hermits have often been presented as indulging their masochistic urges): rather, it was a way of passing on, in a manner appropriate to the times, the mighty image of the presence of Christ among men.

A world of heightened confidence that exemplar would rapidly succeed exemplar, as monk succeeded martyr along the Nile, has left us with some of the most vivid examples of a purely personal system of exemplary behavior ever preserved in the Christian church.

Go and join a man who fears God:—advised Abba Poimen—just by remaining near him, you will gain instruction.⁷⁸

Totally poor, and so with no goods to leave behind except the robe he had stood up in and the mat on which he had lain; even if educated, largely (if not totally) deprived of the expensive and time-consuming tools of literary fame: there was really only one legacy that an Abba could leave to the world—his words and his example. And, in that, they have done us proud:

Abba Or and Abba Athre did not come from the same part of the country yet, until they left their bodies, there was great peace between them. Abba Athre's obedience was great, and great was Abba Or's humility. I spent several days with them, without leaving them for a moment, and I saw a great wonder that Abba Athre did. Someone brought them a little fish and Abba Athre wanted to cook it for the old man. He was holding the knife in the act of cutting up the fish and Abba Or called him. He left the knife in the middle of the fish and did not cut up the rest of it. I admired his great obedience, for he did not say, "Wait till I have cut up the fish." I said to Abba Athre, "Where did you find such obedience?" He said to me, "It is not mine, but the old man's." He took me with him, saying, "Come and see his obedience." He took the fish, intentionally cooked some of it badly, and offered it to the old man who ate it without saying anything. Then he said to him, "Is it good, old man?" He replied, "It is very good." Afterwards he brought him a little that was well cooked and said, "Old man, I have spoiled it," and he replied, "Yes, you have spoiled it a little." Then Abba Athre said to me, "Do you see how obedience is intrinsic to the old man?" I came away from there [concludes Abba Sisoës, our narrator] and what I have told you, I have tried to practice as far as I could.⁷⁹

These anecdotes grip us: "the flash of a signal light, brief, arresting, intense."⁸⁰ But the monk's journey moved on from such delightful particularity. It took him out on to a plateau, surrounded by a mountain range of breath-taking immensity. For the greatest figures in the long history of the righteous on earth stood behind him. To be a "man of God" was to revive, on the banks of the Nile, all other "men of God" in all other ages. "The ascetic must observe most closely [said Anthony] the life and practice of the great Elijah."⁸¹ Occasionally, the lost countenance of Adam could blaze again among these humbled faces:

Just as Moses, while his face was glorified, took on the glory of Adam, so the face of Abba Pambo shone like lightning, and he was like a king sitting on his throne.⁸²

It is Adam as we see him on the mosaic pavement of a fifth-century Syrian church: man as monarch of the creation, sitting with Imperial serenity amidst the wild beasts in Paradise. His quiet pose, like that of Pambo at his meditations, captures the mighty order of man's first estate.⁸³ Little wonder that strong millennial hopes

flickered around the persons of the holy men, and around the walled monasteries of the Nile. For his region, Abba Apollon was “like some new prophet and apostle dwelling in our own generation.”⁸⁴

The specifically Late Roman gusto for declaratory ceremonial heightened this hope, by giving it visible form.⁸⁵ It was possible for an adaptation of the Imperial ceremonials of a state arrival to make the tiny relic-jar of the bones of the prophet Zachariah seem “as if living and present” to the populations through which the cortège passed on its way from Jerusalem to Constantinople.⁸⁶ More disquieting, laywomen found that one of the only ways in which they could, without disapproval, gain contact with Saint Martin was to stylise their relations with him as if they were Martha, or Mary Magdalen falling at the feet of Christ and wiping them with her hair.⁸⁷ Little wonder that Sulpicius Severus’ *Life of Martin* is shadowed by fears of Antichrist: false visions of the Devil, who appeared to Martin dressed as an Imperial Christ;⁸⁸ stories of a youth who had declared himself to be Elias, then Christ, and who had been “adored” as such (possibly by gestures very similar to those which Martin received from his admirers) by a Spanish bishop.⁸⁹ In such ways the *repraesentatio Christi* by the holy man continued to tremble perilously on the edge of the “Pursuit of the Millennium.” This is a further subject, intimately relevant to the quality and the means of the expansion of Christianity in the Roman world: it can be safely left to others to complete.⁹⁰

What I think is more germane to the immediate theme of this paper is the manner in which men who were frequently recent participants in the “central value system” of the Christian church, and whose Christian culture can be shown to have had none of the cultural solidity which modern Christians used to be able until recently to wrap around themselves, passed on this “central value system” in their own persons. The Christian culture of Pachomius and his monks, for instance, must have been a thing of rags and patches.⁹¹ Thus, it is only in the course of long, intense discourses on the meaning of Scriptures which they would all have been reading for the very first time, that some of the most vivid anecdotes in the life of Pachomius emerge, and are then arranged into rough biographical sequence. But their immediate context is an attempt to understand a genuinely alien Gospel in the light of their own experiences: Pachomius learned how to remember the nails of Christ’s Passion, when treading barefoot among the terrible acacia-thorns to gather firewood for his newly-founded community.⁹² The idea of the growth of Christ in the soul can so often seem a doctrine veiled in a golden fog when we read it in the pages even of so exquisite an exponent as Gregory of Nyssa. It derived its unbroken vigor, in Early Christian times, from the innumerable, heroic flounderings of men compelled to discover Christianity only in the act of becoming Christian exemplars.

What resources did these men have to turn to? Han Drijvers mentioned “written and preached tradition.” To this I would like to add liturgical prayer. Chewing through the Psalms and the exclamatory prayers to Jesus that already formed such an important part of ascetic culture—like the village women whom Abba Marcarius

remembered seeing as a child, chewing at mastic to sweeten their breaths⁹³—the monk would be taken, instantly, out of time, into the world of the prophets. For these were *propheticae voces*, now heavy and potent in their own mouths. Christ was eternal, and so could be addressed in all ages and in all places through them. And so was the Devil. The “Prophetic Sound” of the Psalms drove him away, as Martin, a very newly ordained exorcist did, as he crossed the frightening Alps.⁹⁴ There were even “spirit-bearing fathers” who opined that the permanent enemy of the human race had a particular horror of Psalm 67.⁹⁵ Such certainties about essentials stood out like rocks in a sea of doubt and partial ignorance, quite as clear, and often as distant, as the present cry of the muezzin in half-Muslim lands.

In the case of Martin, one can touch on a further layer in his appropriation of the “central value system” of the new faith. He was made an exorcist long before he had any other ecclesiastical rank, such as would have brought him into closer contact with any other form of Christian culture. For lesser figures, the long exorcistic prayers of the Christians were an occasion for virtuoso *cadenzas* of charismatic power. Such prayers made of exorcism a powerful preaching device, that brought into the present an awesome map of the cosmos and the true balance of power with it.⁹⁶ Martin made these diffused values part of the whole of himself: when he performed an exorcism, he did not need to “raise a hurricane of words,” as did the average clergyman.⁹⁷ Faced by a berserk house slave in Trier, it was enough for him to put his fingers into the man’s throat, daring the devil to chew on them.⁹⁸ It is the approach, in silent and so more palpable certainty, of the dread “finger of God” that had first formed the universe, and whose power was reactivated in exorcistic prayer.⁹⁹

Last, but not least, I think that the lasting, warm late classical sense of the intimacy and resilience of bonds of invisible friendship with the company of the righteous gave to the “Christ carrying man” a sense of resources lodged deep within himself. As long as we look at the saints only as distant “good examples,” as modern men tend to do, or as effective “patrons,” as Late Roman men frequently tended to do, we will not touch on a layer of the formation of the Christian sensibility which is, in my opinion, as yet insufficiently explored. In a plethora of books on the anthropology and the psychology of the various Fathers of the Church, I have yet to find very few studies that tell me about the Christian believer’s map of his own self. Yet few periods in the ancient world devoted such serious and consequential attention to the manner by which the frail essence of the concrete identity could be seen as supported and given consistency, through being flanked by hierarchies of protectors, thought of as close in their interaction with the believer’s soul as if they were aspects of his or her own self. If I think I have moved in any way beyond the rather distant portrayal of the holy man, which characterised my work of the early 1970s, it is in the exploration of this difficult theme.¹⁰⁰ As for its implications: let me just remind you that we all still have Christian names—in a Western country at any rate. For a Late Antique man or woman, that meant to take a guide and companion at baptism,

who could act almost as an ideogram for one's own soul, when baptised at the shrine of a saint. Thus a woman, in a partially Christianised family, was able to recognise the martyr-saint Thecla simply because her little grand-daughter, named after and ever-protected by the saint, looked just like Thecla!¹⁰¹ The one was a reflection of the other. It was in this deep manner that Christ was thought to dwell at the root of the self. It was He who revealed Himself as the ever-present *boēthos*, the Helper, of Anthony, once Anthony had overcome the rival claims of layers of demonic self.¹⁰² The martyrs and saints had carried this Christ "in their very marrow,"¹⁰³ to such an extent that the protection of the saint was certain to bring close to the believer the deeper paradigm of Christ himself. It was not merely cultural confusion that caused a shipowner to recount to Paulinus of Nola a miraculous delivery from the storm, in terms of a double vision of Christ *and* of Saint Felix:

Yes, the Lord Himself sat at the stern, now with his own shining countenance and gleaming hair, as described in the Apocalypse, now in the revered appearance of His friend and confessor, my lord and our common patron Felix.¹⁰⁴

In this very visual uncertainty, we catch a hint of the resources of the personality, as conceived by Late Antique Christians, when they looked at the "Christ-bearing man."

At death, all of this became plain. The great men of the desert were greeted by carefully ordered processions of guides and protectors. It is, at one and the same time, the final meeting of masters and their pupil, on which the patient "making of persons into classics" had always depended; and it is the moment when, in the meeting of Christ and man, the glory of the human self could be glimpsed in its awesome fullness:

It was said of Abba Sisoës that when he was at the point of death, while the Fathers were sitting beside him, his face shone like the sun. He said to them, "Look, Abba Anthony is coming." A little later, he said, "Look, the choir of prophets is coming." Again his countenance shone with brightness and, lo, he spoke with someone. Then the old men asked him, "With whom are you speaking, Father?" He said, "Look, the angels are coming to fetch me, and I am begging them to let me do a little penance. . . . Truly I do not think I have even made a beginning yet. . . ." Once more his countenance became like the sun and they were all filled with fear. He said to them, "Look, the Lord is coming. . . ." Then there was a flash of lightning and all the house was filled with a sweet odor.¹⁰⁵

Late Antique Christians lived perched, in this manner, between particularity and grandeur. A culture that produced the most confident and influential metaphysical formulations of the Christian faith—the unflinchingly essentialist nature of which can weigh on many of us like so many crystal girders—was the same culture that had the rigor, the consequentiality and the human warmth to attempt to link this mighty, transcendent structure with the existential position of the believer in a confidently non-Christian world. Because they were late classical men, Early Christians liked their human beings whole and all of one piece. Hence their overwhelm-

ing sense of the possibility of the realization of the image of God in man, that could bring Christ into the present. Hence their faith, in the fourth and fifth centuries, that the ascetic life (and its offshoots among the laity) could replace the “Civilization of *Paideia*” in the ancient endeavor to “make persons into classics.” Rather than dismiss Byzantine hagiography, as has been habitual until comparatively recently, as an interesting rubbish-tip to be picked over by historians of social conditions and of popular beliefs, I would strongly recommend that an hour spent in the company of a Pachomius, an Abba Sisoës or a Saint Martin can tell us more than a whole course in modern dogmatics, how to begin to answer the challenge posed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer almost half a century ago, when he wrote that,

It is becoming clear every day that the most urgent problem besetting our church is this: how can we live the Christian life in the modern world.¹⁰⁶

The Late Roman saints had tried to answer just such a question in their own time. To uncover with sympathy what resources they could hope to bring to bear in acting as exemplars to a profoundly pre-Christian society might bring us a little closer to understanding the rise and function of such persons in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world of Late Antiquity.

Notes

*This paper was delivered at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley as part of a seminar sponsored by the Berkeley-Harvard Project in Comparative Ethics, and, at Harvard, as part of the same Project’s conference on “Sacred Persons as the Embodiment of Moral Values.” I am grateful for the comments of Charles F. Keyes on the latter occasion. I would wish to refer to his own article, “Charisma: From Social Life to Sacred Biography,” that forms the introduction to studies concerned with problems similar to my own, now available in the *Journal of the American Association of Religion: Thematic Studies* 48, 3 and 4 (1982).

1. J. B. Cobb, Jr., *Religious Studies Review* 7 (1981), 287.
2. A. J. Festugière, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* (Paris, 1959), pp. 211–25 is a brilliant short study.
3. Ps.-Clement, *Recognitiones* I, 25, 2.
4. Lucian, *The Ignorant Bookseller* 17: tr. A. M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), Vol. III, p. 195.
5. H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in the Ancient World*, tr. G. Lamb (New York, 1956), pp. 96–101 and 217–26.
6. F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London, 1977), p. xi.
7. Interesting exceptions are provided by writers on military matters: *Anonymus de rebus bellicis*, ed. E. A. Thompson, *A Roman Reformer and Inventor* (Oxford, 1952), praef. 4, p. 91, is aware of this limitation. On Vegetius, now see W. Goffart, *Traditio* 33 (1977), 65–100.
8. P. Veyne, *Le Pain et le Cirque* (Paris, 1976), p. 638, cannot be cited too often: “Les options politiques de l’Antiquité n’étaient pas là où nous les chercherions, dans des pro-

- grammes rivaux de politique constitutionnelle ou bien sociale et elles étaient où nous ne les chercherions pas, dans des options administratives où encore dans la modalité d'obéissance, dans le style de commandement."
9. E. g., *Panegyrici Latini* XII, 4, 5 and 11, 6.
 10. R. MacMullen, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis* (Yale, 1976) pp. 37–48 remains unduly severe; cf. P. Brown, "The Last Pagan Emperor," *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 83–102.
 11. E. Bowie, "The Greeks and their Past in the Second Sophistic," *Past and Present*, 46 (1970), 3–41.
 12. Paulinus, *Poem* 10. 54–56: tr. H. Waddell, *Wandering Scholars* (London, 1927), p. 11.
 13. *Inferno*, canto XV, lines 83–85.
 14. W. Jackson Bates, *Samuel Johnson* (New York, 1975), p. 361.
 15. Marrou, *History of Education*, pp. 197–205; J. Fontaine, *Sulpice Sévère: Vie de Saint Martin*, Sources chrétiennes 134 (Paris, 1968), vol. II, pp. 389–92.
 16. Jerome, *Vita Malchi* 1: *Patrologia Latina* [hereafter *PL.*] 33: 55.
 17. G. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (New York, 1967), pp. 251–52. Cf. P. Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 10 (Washington, D.C., 1967), pp. 31–32, on "footprints" as a form of respect for the presence of the great. Not surprisingly, the footprints of Christ at the place of His Ascension remained unobliterated: Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon* II, 33: *P.L.* 20: 148A.
 18. C. Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980), p. 18.
 19. *Panegyrici Latini* VIII (V), 102: "sive incuria rerum sive quadam inclinatione fatorum." By and large, literary men preferred *incuria* as, at least, remediable.
 20. L. Robert, *Bulletin épigraphique*, 1980, 520; cf. H. I. Marrou, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Le Pédagogue*, Sources chrétiennes 70 (Paris, 1960), p. 89: "Dès lors, une description peut être livresque sans cesser d'être historique."
 21. Plutarch, *On Progress in Virtue*, esp. pp. 7 and 15; on laughter: Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificia*, 12. 5; on suicide after a fart: Diogenes Laertius, vi.94.
 22. *Eccli.* 19. 27(LXX = *Sirach* 19.30).
 23. H. I. Marrou, *Décadence romaine ou Antiquité tardive?* (Paris, 1977), pp. 15–20, with typical acuteness, is the first to pose the relation between changing styles of costume and the sense of the self in Late Antiquity.
 24. John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matth.*, IV, 4.
 25. C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), pp. 360–411.
 26. Plotinus, *Enneads* I, 6, 9.
 27. P. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), pp. 75–76.
 28. I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin, 1969), pp. 27–29.
 29. Tr. R. Edmonds, Penguin Classics, 1954, p. 13.
 30. I. Ševčenko, "A Shadow Outline of Virtue: The Classical Heritage of Greek Christian Literature," in *Age of Spirituality: a Symposium*, ed. K. Weitzmann (Princeton, 1980), pp. 53–73 is masterly.
 31. A. Goldberg, "Der Heilige und die Heiligen: Vorüberlegungen zur Theologie des heiligen Menschen im rabbinischen Judentum," in *Aspekte frühchristlicher Heiligenverehrung*, *Oikonomia* 6 (Erlangen, 1977), 16–34 at 19.
 32. Goldberg, *ibid.*, p. 25.
 33. Paulinus, *Poem* 19.18. The image reappears, surprisingly, in the Qasīda Sāsāniyya of Abū Dulaf, line 188: C. E. Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld* (Leiden, 1976), p. 213.

34. *Vita Symeonis Junioris*, prolog. ed. P. van den Ven, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 32 (Brussels, 1962), 1; *Vita Theodori Syceotae*, ed. A. J. Festugière, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 48 (Brussels 1970) i: 1 (cf. the editor's remarks, of characteristic learning and somewhat less insight, on this, "le commun bagage de nos auteurs:" i, p. vi).
35. Gregory of Nyssa, *De perfectione christiana*, as cited in Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, p. 91.
36. Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 8.
37. On the very real problem, for any non-Byzantine, of the Emperor's Imitation of Christ, see the thoughtful remarks of Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, pp. 132–33 and 267.
38. *Apophthegmata Patrum: Patrologia Graeca* 65 [hereafter *P.G.*]: Poimen 144. Compare the very different methods used in late medieval Germany: M. Baxandall, *The Lime-wood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (Yale, 1980), pp. 50–69.
39. Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio* 8, cf. 3.
40. Ps.-Athanasius, *De passione et cruce Domini: P. G.* 28: 237A.
41. Jamblichus, *Vita Pythagorica* 15, 68.
42. E.g. H. von Balthasar, *Présence et pensée: Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris, 1942), and J. Danielou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (Paris, 1953).
43. Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago, 1975), p. 4. I owe much to the further elaboration of Shils' ideas by C. Geertz, "Centers, Kings and Charisma," in *Culture and its Creators*, eds. J. Ben David and T. N. Clarke (Chicago, 1977), pp. 150–171; but not on the issues on which I touch in this paper.
44. Shils, *Center and Periphery*, p. 111.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
46. *Vita Pachomii Graeca Prima* 29. This crucial text is edited and translated (with a few major errors) by A. A. Athanassakis, Society of Biblical Literature (Scholar's Press, Missoula, Montana, 1975).
47. *V. Pachom.* 25.
48. E. A. E. Reymond and J. W. Barns, *Four Martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codices* (Oxford, 1973), p. 158.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 176–177.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
52. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VI, p. 34.
53. "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), now available with updated footnotes in *Society and the Holy*, pp. 103–52; see also "Town, Village and Holy Man," now *ibid.*, 153–65.
54. N. H. Baynes, "The Thought World of East Rome," *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1960), 24–46 at p. 26.
55. P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972), p. 334.
56. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1964), vol. II, pp. 938–85. Jones would always speak to me of this aspect of his work with transparent enthusiasm. It is he who always urged the need for a modern Lecky.
57. For my first attempts to remedy this, see "The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity," *Center for Hermeneutical Studies*, Colloquy 34 (Berkeley, 1980), 1–17 and "Greek *Paideia* and Islamic *Adab*: Contrasts and Comparisons," *Sources of Moral Authority: the Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Metcalf (forthcoming). I would not have come to this interest (and the challenge it posed to my previous methodology) if I had not benefitted from the example of the work of Dr. Francis Robinson of Royal Holloway College, London, on the learned men of the Firangi Mahal.
58. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 29–36.
59. "Rise and Function" in *Society and the Holy*, at p. 114; "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclast Controversy," *English Historical Review*, 88 (1973), *ibid.*, 251–301; "Society and the Supernatural: a medieval change," *Daedalus*, 104 (1975), *ibid.*, 302–32;

- "Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours," Stenton Lecture 1977, *ibid.*, 222–50.
60. E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York, 1915), p. 107.
 61. "Learning and Imagination," *Society and the Holy*, pp. 3–21.
 62. H. E. Chadwick, "Pachomius and the Idea of Sanctity," *The Byzantine Saint*, University of Birmingham Fourteenth Symposium of Byzantine Studies, ed. S. Hackel, Studies Supplementary to Sobornost 5 (1981), 12.
 63. *Society and the Holy*, pp. 130–32.
 64. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 299.
 65. Libanius, *Orat.* 47, 11.
 66. R. M. Price, "The Role of Military Men in Syria and Egypt," Oxford D. Phil., 1974.
 67. *Society and the Holy*, pp. 269 and 318.
 68. William A. Christian Jr., *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (New York, 1972), p. 130.
 69. P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 13–21.
 70. H. J. W. Drijvers, "Hellenistic and Oriental Origins," *The Byzantine Saint*, p. 33.
 71. S. Eyice-J. Noret, "S. Lucien disciple de S. Lucien d'Antioche," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 91 (1973), 363–77 at p. 365.
 72. Theodore, *Catechesis*, ed. Lefort, p. 151.
 73. *V. Pachom.* 144.
 74. Careful reading of T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981) leaves no doubt as to the confidence of the late third century Church, and the ability of its leaders to impose a pre-formed perspective on the excitements of their times.
 75. A. Grabar, *Martyrium* (Paris, 1946), ii: 74; J.W. Salomonson, *Voluptatem spectandi non perdat sed mutet. Observations sur l'iconographie des martyrs en Afrique romaine* (Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 47–50 and 86–88.
 76. Reymond and Barns, *Four Martyrdoms*, p. 222.
 77. *V. Pachom.* 1.
 78. *Apophthegmata Patrum*: Poimen 65, cited in P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church* (Oxford, 1978), p. 21—by far the most thoughtful treatment of the whole subject.
 79. *Apophth.* Pistos, tr. B. Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (London, 1975), pp. 166–67.
 80. Rousseau, *Ascetics*, p. 12.
 81. Athanasius, *V. Ant.* 7.
 82. *Apophth.* Pambo 12.
 83. M. Y. and P. Canivet, "La mosaïque dans l'église syriaque de Huārte (V e. s.)," *Cahiers archeologiques*, 24 (1975), 49–60.
 84. *Historia Monachorum* vii, 8.
 85. S. G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981).
 86. Jerome, *Adv. Vigilantium* 5: see E. D. Hunt, "Traffic in Relics," *The Byzantine Saint*, p. 179.
 87. Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* II, 6: *PL.* 20: 216. For the more normal dire effect of a woman brushing, if only accidentally, against the foot of a bishop: F. Nau, "Histoire des solitaires," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, 13 (1908), no. 32, 62–64. Martin usually expected women to avoid him: *Dial.* II, 9–10.
 88. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini* 24: 174D.
 89. *Ibid.*, 173B.
 90. See esp. R. van Dam, "Gregory of Thaumaturgus and the Conversion of Pontus," *Classical Antiquity* (forthcoming), who in this and other work, has made particularly conscious and fruitful use of Geertz's "Centers, Kings and Charisma" to understand the problems of the expansion of Christianity and the relocations of power accompanying the end of the Empire in the West.

91. Hence constant debate on the “orthodoxy” of the Pachomian settlements, raised by their possible connection with the Gnostic literature discovered near a major monastery, at Nag Hammadi: Chadwick, “Pachomius,” *The Byzantine Saint*, pp. 17–19.
92. *V. Pachom.* 11.
93. A. Guillaumont, “Une inscription copte sur la ‘Prière de Jésus,’ ” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 34 (1968), 310–25, at p. 322.
94. Sulp. Sev., *V. Mart.* 6: 162.
95. Ps.-Athanasius, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* 14, *P. G.* 28: 605B.
96. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 106–113.
97. Sulp. Sev., *Dial.* III, 6: 215A 98. Sulp. Sev., *V. Mart.* 17: 170B.
99. O. Böcher, *Christus Exorcista* (Stuttgart, 1972), p. 18.
100. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, pp. 69–72, with the articles to which I was most deeply indebted; further in *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 50–59.
101. *Vie et Miracles de S. Thècle*/, 13 ed. G. Dagron, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 62 (Brussels, 1978), p. 314.
102. Brown, *Making of Late Antiquity*, pp. 89–91; R. Gregg and D. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1981), pp. 131–59 and *in toto* is now essential.
103. *Vita Honorati* 38, ed. S. Cavallin (Lund, 1952).
104. Paulinus, *Letter* 49, 3, tr. P. G. Walsh, *Ancient Christian Writers* (New York, 1967), p. 261.
105. *Apophth.* Sisoës 14, tr. Ward, p. 180.
106. D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, 1963), p. 60.